

April 25, 1990

Most Reverend Pierre DuMaine  
Bishop of San Jose  
7600 St. Joseph Avenue  
Los Altos, CA 94022

Dear Bishop Dumaine:

As I know you recognize, my participation with the Committee on Human Values over the last several years has been stimulating, interesting, and rewarding. We have all, together, aired questions and issues in a rational, scholarly manner and consequently improved the dialogue between the two quite different human worlds - religion and science. Characteristically, we have not tried to convince one another - only to understand. And I have admired the enthusiasm and dedication with which the Bishops have learned about modern science.

It was my impression, confirmed by many comments at the meetings, that the Bishops hoped that by understanding current scientific views, they would enhance their pastoral missions in the complex, highly technical modern world. The seriousness with which the Bishops engaged these studies and conversations seemed to signal a forward motion in the relation between science and the Church. And because I have experienced the same serious, scholarly approach to science at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, I was confident that the signal was real.

Yet now, with the announcement that a public relations firm will take the American Bishops' position on abortion to the American people, I must question my optimism. We have not, in the Committee on Human Values, discussed abortion itself. But we have touched on many related issues in modern biology and medicine. We have learned that many complex scientific and theological questions intersect the abortion issue. Careful dialogue can illuminate these issues, but American 'PR' techniques cannot. We all know that 'PR' techniques confuse and compromise serious discussion of issues. We have only to

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Page 2

consider the sad state of U.S. electoral politics that has followed its switch from real discussion to 'PR' tactics. How can we imagine that questions of morality, ethics, reproductive physiology, diagnosis of genetic diseases, and use of fetal tissues to treat diseases can be fruitfully discussed by slogans and sound-bites?

It is very difficult for me to believe that the participants in our Committee, both Bishops and scientists, can be comfortable with the newly announced campaign. It seems to negate the entire spirit of our extraordinary dialogues. I would very much appreciate hearing from you about this. I have come to respect greatly your constructive and thoughtful analyses of difficult questions.

With very best regards,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Maxine".

Maxine F. Singer

MFS/sb

bcc: Dr. Paul Berg